FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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755.00/3-1750

TO : Department of State

FROM : Moscow 318 March 17, 1950

REF :

SUBJECT : Transmittal of Soviet press items on the Belgian Referendum concerning the return of King Leopold

EUR INDEX

1

For Dept. use only.

RECD MAR 24

ACTION EUR*

INFO DCR CLI* IE*

There are enclosed copies in translation of two items concerning the "Referendum on the Royal Question in Belgium" which appeared in Izvestiya March 14th.

One of the items, a Prague Tass report, alleged that the referendum was conducted under conditions of "unbridled terror." It claimed that 43% of the voters cast their ballots against the King's return despite the "intensified campaign of the Catholic Church," the attempts of "Belgian reaction to organize terror in the industrial centres of Wallonia" and the activities of reactionaries, "all armed with steel truncheons," who "were supplied with American motor bars and even had a few planes."

RECEIVED DEPARTMENT OF STATE 1950 MAR 24 AM 11 08 DC/R RECORDS BRANCH

For the Chargé d'Affaires

Brewster H. Morris
Counsellor of Embassy

Enclosure:
Soviet press article

cc Brussels

755.00/3-1750

FAP

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY J.L. SMITH DATE NOV 1 1982

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DLReed:BHR March 14, 1950

ACTION COPY — DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The action office must return this permanent record copy to DC/R files with an endorsement of action taken.

SOME PAPERS

REFERENDUM ON THE ROYAL QUESTION IN BELGIUM

BRUSSELS March 13 TASS. The Belgian Ministry of Internal Affairs has announced the results of the referendum on the royal question.

5,236,740 people participated in the referendum, i.e. 200,000 people less than in the parliamentary elections in 1949. 2,933,382 votes were registered for the return of Leopold, i.e. 57.7%, 2,151,881 votes or 42.3% - against, and 151,477 voting papers were invalid or not filled out.

After the announcement of the results of the referendum, the Minister of Internal Affairs declared that more than 50% of the people in seven of the nine provinces voted for the return of Leopold. A considerable majority in Flanders voted for the return of Leopold; in Wallonia and Brussels only a minority.

PRAGUE March 13 TASS. Telepress agency reports from Brussels that despite the wishes of nearly half of the Belgian population, the former King Leopold III, who capitulated before the Hitlerite army in 1940 and who later collaborated with the Hitlerite authorities, will return to Belgium after the referendum held on March 12. Despite the unbridled terror and the intensified campaign of the Catholic Church, nearly 43% of all the voters said "no" to the question concerning the return of Leopold III to Belgium. Belgian reaction strove to organise terror in the industrial centres of Wallonia where the most powerful opposition to the return of the King was expected.

A large part of the reactionary gro s were supplied with American motor cars and even had a few planes. It is noted that they were one and all armed with steel truncheons. The reactionaries provoked clashes in various places. In Louvain, 8 Communists were seriously wounded and sent to hospital. A prominent Communist Party worker was seriously wounded in a Brussels suburb. In Ghent, Liegeal, Brussels and other industrial centres, detachments of reactionaries organised attacks on the Communist and Socialist Party buildings.

The Catholic Church took an active part in the terrorist campaign. On March 11 Cardinal Van Roy delivered a speech in favour of the return of the King. He intimidated Catholic voters in all possible ways and demanded that they should vote for the King.

The Secretary of the CC of the Belgian Communist Party, Jan Terfve, declared that the referendum on the royal question does not signify the cessation of the struggle by the progressive forces of Belgium against reaction and that the struggle will be continued with unflagging intensity.

(½ col.) (Full text) SOME PAPERS (Izv.) 14.3.50

MOST PAPERS

DEPARTURE FOR PARIS OF A DELEGATION OF THE SOVIET COMMITTEE IN DEFENCE OF PEACE

K.M. Simonov and D.B. Kabalevski, representatives of the Soviet Committee in defence of peace, left Moscow for Paris on March 13. They will be members of a delegation of the Permanent Committee of the World Congress of the Partisans of Peace which is to deliver to the British parliament the proposals of the committee, addressed to the governments of all countries.

(9 lines) (Full text) MOST PAPERS (Pr.) 14.3.50

APR 6 - 1950

MOST PAPERS

DEPARTURE FROM MOSCOW OF MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION OF THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE OF THE WORLD CONGRESS OF THE PARTISANS OF PEACE

Sandro Peatini, Raenata Vigano and Emilio Lussu, members of the delegation of the Permanent Committee of the World Congress of the Partisans of Peace which on March 8 delivered the address of the committee to the Chairman of the Chambers of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, left Moscow for Italy on March 13.

The guests were seen off at the airport by A.A. Surkov, Deputy Secretary General of the Union of Soviet Writers of the USSR; M.I.Kotov, the managing secretary of the Soviet Committee in defence of peace; and M.D.Ovsyannikova, a representative of the Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet Women.
(14 lines) (Full text) MOST PAPERS (Fr.) 14.3.50

PRAVDA

AT THE CONFERENCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE FINNISH COMMUNIST PARTY

HELSINKI March 13 TASS. The work of the 6th conference of the council of the governing board of the Finnish Communist Party continued yesterday. Numerous salutatory telegrams are being sent to the conference from various workers' organisations. The hall where the conference is being held, has been visited by many workers' delegations which thanked the Communist Party for its staunch defence of the interests of the working class.

At the end of the debates on the report by the Secretary General of the Communist Party, Wille Pessi, the latter delivered a concluding speech in which he spoke on the government question.

The Chairman of the Communist Party Aimo Aaltonen, delivered a report on the organisational and political tasks of the Party. He emphasised that the primary task of the Finnish Communist Party is the exposure of the warmongers and their militarist propaganda and also the struggle for the unity of the working class. The speaker noted in particular the growth of the progressive forces in Finland.
(24 lines) (Full text) PRAVDA 14.3.50

MOSCOW PRAVDA

HOW THE ELECTIONS TOOK PLACE IN GREECE

ATHENS March 12 TASS. The newspaper "Maha" cites curious examples describing how the parliamentary elections were held in Greece. The Ministry of Internal Affairs relieved itself of the obligation of providing a sufficient number of voting papers in all districts, so that each Party was supposed to take care of this matter itself. Naturally, under the existing conditions in the provinces, the "Democratic Coalition" was unable to provide all districts with voting papers. The newspaper cites numerous facts indicating the arbitrariness during the drawing up of the electoral lists. In many regions, as for example in Kerkira, Levkada, Patras, Megara, the local authorities arbitrarily crossed off the lists voters who boycotted the elections in 1946. In Magara alone 370 voters were crossed off the lists.